

PRESBYTERY MEETING

March 15, 2014

POSTLUDE

Praise and Glory to God!



TE Jae Ho Lee

Rev. Jae Ho Lee, Senior Pastor of Korean Central PC, Houston, graciously welcomed the commissioners to the meeting. During morning prayers, the choir and orchestra of Korean Central

offered outstanding musical presentations which will long be remembered for their brilliance and power.

Caressa Murray, Coordinator for Youth Ministry, reported that 450 junior and senior high school youth attended Youth Conclaves this year, representing 35 congregations in the presbytery. There are many more youth who would like to participate in presbytery-related youth events, but are in need of financial assistance in order to attend. The morning offering will establish a scholarship fund for youth to participate in Conclaves and PYCC. Caressa



introduced 2 of the young people who received scholarships this year from private donors.

Emmanuel Rivera (left) and Norberto Herrera (below) gave testimony to their experiences at Conclaves. Said Emmanuel, "By giving generously today, you can give youth like me amazing opportunities to experience God's

love and strengthen their faith in Christ." The morning offering totaled \$2,977.00.

'You wanna go where everybody knows your name'

By TE Patricia Clark, Postlude Reporter

Walking to the pulpit to the theme song of the sitcom "Cheers," General Presbyter Mike Cole gave a rousing State of the Presbytery address to commissioners attending the March 22nd meeting at the Korean Central Presbyterian Church. Building on the keynote theme that stressed the importance of relationships, Mike said, "Our relationships speak louder than our words about our integrity and our intentions." He then proceeded to give a litany illustrating that relationships within the presbytery are mostly good.

As evidence, Mike cited the fiscal year of 2013 that ended in the black for the first time in years, a balanced budget for 2014, and seven different mission trips involving more than a hundred

Presbyterians headed for Peru this summer. He praised the Jewish Presbyterian Dialogue initiative for helping create a position for a Peacemaking Associate in the Middle East, a vibrant Presbyterian Youth Connection Council, and an expanded Outreach budget supporting a broader spectrum of mission.

Mike also pointed to a first-ever sponsorship of a free Night at the Children's Museum: "No fund raising, no

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Envisioning the future of the presbytery

By RE David Coles, Postlude Reporter

Mike Cole in his State of the Presbytery address pointed out that when speaking of defining and refining our presbytery's vision, our discussions are not about restructuring the Presbytery. Nor are they about developing a new mission statement. Rather, our discussions are about discovering together who God wants us to be by listening very carefully to what the Spirit is saying through our smallest congregations all the way to our largest ones. The result of such careful listening will carry our Presbytery into the next decade.

To facilitate this listening process, General Council has established a Visioning Team, who will facilitate a multi-month series of conversations

with as many churches in our Presbytery as possible: large and small, established and new, stable and in transition, thriving and otherwise. These conversations will

explore the value of our Presbytery relationships as we collectively live into the Great Commission to "Go into the world and make disciples..." (Mt 28:19a)

To facilitate this process General Council engaged Rev. Dr. David Sawyer to serve as the consultant to the

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David Sawyer

'where everybody knows your name'...cont. from page 1



Mike Cole

speeches, no presentations, no ulterior motives - just a time to build relationships."

The general presbyter admitted there have been some relational difficulties: "We've dismissed our seventh congregation today, and we have one more still in process of discerning. That hurts this part of the body of Christ." Even so, he stressed that there has been a silver lining. "I'm proud of us for claiming the high ground of being gracious with our brothers and sisters who seek different mindedness. I'm proud of us for building bridges rather than burning them!"

Mike then introduced commissioners to a fresh initiative of exploring the value of the relationships and mission of this presbytery. "This is about discovering together what kind of vibrant presbytery God wants us to be by listening carefully, very carefully to what the Spirit is saying through our smallest congregations all the way to our largest ones." Three staff members, including Mike himself, Mary Marcotte, and Forbes Baker, plan to retire in the last half of 2016. He said, "As much as we would love to put our hand prints all over it, we recognize that a new path will require new leadership unimpeded by prior leadership. Isn't even that a great testimony to the power of our trusting relationships?"

In closing, Mike pointed out that presbytery is all about congregations and how together more can be done than as individuals, mission opportunities yet to be discovered, deepening relationships and spreading the influence of Jesus Christ in the world. "It's about partnering with one another and cheering each other on. It's about outdoing each other in grace and love. It's about being disciples."

He closed, as he began, with words from the "Cheers" theme song. "There's no place like home where everyone knows your name."

Relational Discipleship: our hunger for meaningful relationships

By TE Gayle Grubbs, member of General Council

Robert E. Hall, author of *This Land of Strangers*, and Ruling Elder of the Canyon Creek Presbyterian Church in Dallas, presented a timely, informative, and motivating keynote address about "Relational Discipleship." Robert Hall is a noted author, consultant, and speaker on relationships. Cofounder and CEO of a two-hundred-person relationship management firm with offices in the United States, Canada, Latin America, United Kingdom, South Africa, and Australia, he has consulted for twenty plus years with major corporations.



Robert Hall

Robert Hall's scriptural base for the importance of meaningful relationships is Genesis 2:18 "When the Lord God said 'It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him'" and Matthew 22:36-40, the Great Commandment to love God and others on which rest all the law and the prophets.

Providing compelling statistics from many sources describing our contemporary situation in which we flee from relationships at home and at work, in politics and in faith, he laments that transient customers are served by transient employees, overseen by transient managers of companies owned by transient shareholders. Robert Hall identifies Extreme Consumerism and Worship at the Altar of Technology as the root causes of the decline in relationships.

Relational Leadership is the remedy for reversing our decline in meaningful relationships, said Robert Hall. He recommends that we:

1. Make relationship strategies an intentional priority. In order to build strong relationship infrastructure, families should sing, read, play, and eat together.
2. Embrace the small and local community to create relationships of togetherness as opposed to separation and loneliness.
3. Practice relational leadership in which we create communities that invite and honor the giftedness of everyone.

When we respond to our God-created hunger for meaningful relationships by following Jesus' Great Commandment to love God and our neighbor as ourselves, we will realize our most "valuable, tangible, and hopeful" God-given relationships. (*This Land of Strangers*, 297)

Reporter's note: By way of a personal comment, let me say that I think the spirit and conversations at lunchtime seemed much more friendly and energetic than usual. I think that all at the presbytery meeting heard and related to his message!

Welcome, Rose, to New Covenant!

Dr. Rose E. Niles is Houston's new Development Officer, representing Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, comes to us after almost 7 years as Associate for Theological Education and Seminary Relations for the Committee on Theological Education and the Presbyterian Mission Agency in Louisville, KY.



Rev. Dr. Rose Niles

Rose is transferring from Hudson River Presbytery where she served as Pastor at the First Presbyterian Church of Mount Vernon, NY. She has an AB in Comparative World Religion from Harvard University, MDiv from Harvard Divinity School, and DMin from New York Theological Seminary.

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Visioning Team. Prior to his current work consulting with churches and church institutions, David was Professor of Ministry and Director of Lifelong Learning and Advanced Degrees at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

David recounted a brief history of how things such as science, environment, gender, family, economics, and technology had impacted the mission and structure of presbyteries over the years. He noted the 1950s-1960s could probably be best termed the “establishment” phase, where presbyteries were relatively small in geographic size and generally only the big urban centers had presbytery staff. In the establishment phase, presbyteries were held together by norms that were observed by common consent.

The 1970s-1980s, the “corporate” phase, saw increasing mission and structure being built around a corporate model. This phase suggested a hierarchical way of doing the “business” of the church. Presbyteries gradually moved toward being held together by regulation and process.

The next phase was the consumerist phase, which predominated in the 1990s-2000s. David noted this phase was a time when decency and respect were giving way to dissention and dispute. It was marked by presbyteries seeing their mission as revolving around “servicing” congregations.

Now, as we are into the 20-teens, David says that the role of presbyteries is ripe for re-examination. He says, “The rules of engagement no longer work; we can’t agree on how our theological

tradition informs everyday ethics; the ties that bind us together are beginning to fray.” He sums up the current phase by suggesting, “We have to not only think outside the box, we probably need to recycle the box!”

To accomplish this outside-the-box thinking, the Visioning Team will be using a process called Appreciative Inquiry (AI), which fosters conversation that is held together by forming and sustaining relationships that lead to results for the common good. AI understands that wisdom and vision resides within each of us and that facilitated conversation will help us give voice to that wisdom and vision.

Members of the Visioning Team: CRE Debbie Battise-Kleinman, Indian Presbyterian, Livingston; RE Dave Coles, Pines PC, Houston; TE Laura Grice, The Woodlands Community Presbyterian; TE Lynn Hargrove, Stated Clerk of Presbytery of New Covenant; RE Shelley Hernandez, Pathways; TE Peter Holmes, Tiki Island Chapel; TE Shawn Kang, Pathways; TE Keaton King, St. Philip; TE Steve Oglesbee, Clear Lake.

The Visioning Team’s role is to guide the Presbytery through a process of figuring out “who we are and what God is calling us to be and do” in the next chapter of our Christian walk.

Focused lunch conversations began the process of listening, seeking positive input from many voices in order to get a feel for who this presbytery is now and what makes things work in this region. The next step will be listening for God’s leading and then opening the door to what God wants to happen.

Candidates complete examination process

Four Candidates preached a sermon before the presbytery to complete their ordination exams. Congratulations (l to r) Greg, Ryan, Alex, and Katherine!



Greg Davis has been called to serve part time as Stated Supply at San Pablo+Trinity PC in Houston. Greg received his MDiv from Princeton Theological Seminary. Greg will be ordained Sat., Apr. 12, at 4 p.m. at San Pablo+Trinity.



Ryan Kim has been called to serve as Associate Pastor at Korean Central PC P in Houston. Ryan received his MDiv from Harvard University Divinity School, Th.M. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and a Preaching Candidate Ph.D. from London School Theology in Homiletics.



Alex Cornell has been called to serve as Pastor of St. Stephen PC in Houston. Alex received his MDiv from Austin Presbyterian Seminary.



Katherine Doehring is serving as part-time Director of Campus Ministries of UCM Aggieland. She received her MDiv from Duke Divinity



Those who have been elected to serve as Commissioners to the 221st General Assembly, (meeting June 14-21, 2014 in Detroit) were commissioned. Those present at the meeting (l to r):

TE Jackie Hannan, Atascocita; **TE Sam Jun**, Pines, Houston; **RE Jody Harrington**, MDPC, Houston; **RE Nancy Penney**, First, Conroe; **RE Ann Hardy**, St. John’s, Houston; **YAAD Clay Shupak**, First, Lufkin; **RE John Hathaway**, Woodlands Community; **TE Steve Oglesbee**, Clear Lake, Houston; **RE Forbes Baker**, Westminster, Houston. Absent from photo: **RE Dan Alexander**, Waverly and Trinity and **TE Helen Deleon**, Webster.

Envisioning our future: Conversation begins at lunch!



2014

Stated Presbytery Meetings

Sat., July 19 – Covenant PC, College Station

Sat., Nov. 8 – Indian PC, Livingston

CODA

Elder and minister commissioners received the following announcements and conducted the following additional business:

- The congregation of Providence Church of Southeast Texas, Nederland, was dismissed from the denomination to the Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians, pending completion of the transfer.
- Adopted the proposed budget for the calendar year 2014.
- Approved the Policy for PC(USA) Pastors Who Serve Churches in Other Denominations.
- Approved the church name change from Timber Ridge Presbyterian Church to Alden Bridge Presbyterian Church in The Woodlands.
- TE Stephen Rehrig has accepted a interim pastor position in Mission Presbytery.
- TE David McKechnie has been dismissed to Pacific Presbytery.
- TE Thomas Sharon has been dismissed to Grace Presbytery.
- TE Paul Yeou has been granted permission to labor outside the bounds of New Covenant Presbytery for 1 year and to serve the Canaan Presbyterian Church in the Chicago area.
- The Presbytery of New Covenant does not require permission to labor outside the bounds of presbytery for one time events. The minister inquires of the presbytery's Stated Clerk in which the event is scheduled if it is required to seek permission to labor within the bounds.
- Application for Vision Initiative Grants and Lynn Johnson Social Justice Funds should be emailed to RE Jody Harrington, jody.harrington@gmail.com, by **Tues., Apr. 1**. See "Our Filing Cabinet" on the website (folder: Grants and Scholarships).

*Postlude is published after each Stated Meeting.
Editor: RE Helen Wolf*

Photographers: TE Shawn Kang, Pathways Church of Houston; and JangSoon Lee, Korean Central PC, Houston

Reporters: TE Patricia Clark (HR), TE Gayle Grubbs (HR), and RE Dave Coles (Pines PC, Houston)

Circulation: Patricia Brantley and Sandra Lopez